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SUBJECT: QATAR ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF "SILATECH" GLOBAL
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

¶1. (U) Sheikha Mozah bin Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of the Qatari Amir, announced January 15 the establishment of the "Silatech" ("your connection" in Arabic) Global Youth Employment Initiative. The announcement was made at the First Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations held in Madrid. In making the announcement, Sheikha Mozah, who heads the Qatar Foundation and oversees civil society, education, and development initiatives in Qatar, noted that she and the Amir would contribute USD 100 million in private funds as seed money for the initiative. The program is envisioned to begin pilot projects in five countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a region with some of the highest rates of youth unemployment and underemployment in the world. In making the announcement, Sheikha Mozah stressed the urgent need for action in order to address the root causes of hopelessness, frustration and intolerance among the world's youth.

¶2. (U) The mission of the organization is to connect young people to enterprise and employment opportunities. Its goal is to significantly increase the number of young people in meaningful employment, starting in MENA. Key activities include:

- Advocating for government policies that encourage greater youth entrepreneurship and employment;
- Promoting market-related training, job linkages and placements;
- Enabling state-of-the-art contact and counseling centers;
- Experimenting with ground-breaking technologies to connect young people with each other and potential employers;
- Providing access to business development services and capital for aspiring young entrepreneurs;
- Creating opportunities for job attachments such as internships and apprenticeships; and
- Breaking job cultural barriers to risk taking and entrepreneurship.

¶3. (U) Silatech will comprise three major components: a Coordination and Research Center based in Qatar that will serve as a major focal point on youth employment issues for the MENA region; Virtual Centers that will connect young

people with potential employers and each other; and a Youth Employment Fund that will invest in a variety of efforts and activities to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship across the region. The program has received the support of the International Labor Organization and the World Bank, and Cisco has been named a Global Strategic Technology Provider. The Arab League joined the initiative as a partner January 26.

¶4. (U) A two-day "summit" will be held June 1-2 in Doha to cement commitments and actions of international and regional leaders and donors toward investing in job creation and economic development for young people in the MENA region. A Board of Trustees chaired by Sheikha Mozah, and reportedly including prominent international figures, and the five pilot countries will be announced at the summit.

¶5. (SBU) Richard Little, Chair of the Organizing Team of Silatech, told CDA February 19 that the program is targeted at 18 - 30 year olds and will be a joint public-private-civil society venture bringing together companies, foundations, individuals, commercial banks, governments and other public sector partners. In addition to the USD 100 million commitment by the Amir and his wife, Little told us other unnamed donors have also contributed funding. Little stressed that current programs targeting youth unemployment in MENA (including USAID programs) are only "boutique" projects that have little lasting effect. Little envisions Silatech to be much more effective in reaching unemployed youth in MENA and elsewhere.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Compared to other initiatives of the Qatar Foundation, Silatech is the most ambitious to date. Despite the claims of Silatech staff that they are an independent NGO that "happens to be based in Doha," we are skeptical that

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Arab governments will view Silatech as independent of the Government of Qatar and worthy of support across the wider region. That said, the organizers strike us as able and sincere. Post believes our missions across the region and the Middle East Partnership Initiative will want to monitor developments as Silatech seeks to establish its presence.
RATNEY